462 ditions offer opportunities to the kind of man who is clever with his hands and with tools. As such a man usually works for people who live in the same village or are members of the same clan, what usually happens is that the "clever" friend is invited to come over to lend a helping hand. A large part of his reward is in the opportunity to show his superior skill. When the job has been done he is invited to dinner, or if he is a poor man he is given some grain. Such opportunities are not enough, however, to enable a man to become a full-time specialized artisan.

Two Monguor artisans, self-made men, gave me the clue to the answer to this problem. "If there were no rich people," they said, "and above all if there were no monasteries in our country, we could never have been able to make a living as artisans; we would never have been anything but helpers. Because of the monasteries and the rich people, however, we are able to work all the year round and to take on apprentices." For this kind of artisan employment, rich people and monasteries provide the materials and the artisan provides only the special skill in using the materials.

463 A youngster who is handy with tools and wants to be-
874 come an artisan invites two elders of his village to go with him at the New Year to see the artisan to whom he wants to apprentice himself. He presents the traditional "scarf of felicity" and two pieces of meat. The elders stand as surety for his obedience and honesty. He makes nine prostrations to the master artisan and promises obedience. A contract is then signed by the guarantors, the master artisan, and the boy. The period of apprenticeship is usually three years, during which the apprentice lives at the home of his master and in addition to learning his trade works, without pay, at all kinds of odd jobs, such as preparing his master's food, and working in his fields in the busy times of sowing and harvesting.

After three years, if the master is satisfied, the apprentice prepares a sheep and wine and invites his master, his two guarantors, and the former apprentices of his master to a feast. He presents his master with a gown or a pair of trousers or boots, prostrates himself nine times and receives from his master a set of the tools of his trade. He is then himself a master-artisan, and although he still has to work another year for his master, he is now paid for his work. For the rest of his life he feels indebted to his master and bound to help him whenever asked.

415 One of the minor industries engaged in by Monguors
●313 is the manufacture of wooden bowls and small wooden
[322] boxes. The wood used is poplar, which is turned on a lathe and then coated with oil. Another small-scale occupation is the making of charcoal. Monguors living near forests belonging to lamaseries pay the monastery for the right to cut trees from which they burn charcoal which they take to the towns to sell. Other Monguors buy trees as they stand in the forest, cut them, and saw

1; Schram M-5 (1911-1922) 1954 AE9 Monguor AE9

415 313 planks. Some of these planks are cut to the standard measurements for making coffins, and sold in the towns. Another woodworking trade is the making of pack saddles for donkeys, mules, and oxen, which are sold either in the towns or at fairs.

THE CITY BECOMES THE CENTER OF ECONOMIC LIFE

177 369 At the end of this chapter it is interesting to consider from what center originated the new economic life of the Monguors, how it developed, and what were the repercussions on the social organization of the Monguor clans, as they evolved away from pastoralism. For nearly four centuries the economic life of the Monguors was fraught with insecurity and calamities, and deprived of the peace that is the first requirement for social welfare. Indeed the economic conditions of the Monguors and of the whole country improved only when the Ch'ing dynasty secured peace, and this improvement depended on the vitality of commerce. No trade of real importance had been able to coexist with insecurity on the roads, since trade requires normal and regular transportation facilities and a safe access to the outlets of commerce. For the center of a developed economy a city is required. In this case the city was Hsining, with its group of professional merchants from all over China, associated in guilds according to the Chinese custom.

177 369 632 [487] The prefectural city of Hsining is advantageously situated on the river of the same name, a tributary of the Yellow River, which flows past Lanchou, the capital of the province. Hsining is also on the road from Peking to Lhasa and India. It was the seat of the political and military administration of the country, and the merchants settled there because it was a fortified and garrisoned city. Under the older order in China important concerns maintained their headquarters in major cities and sent their agents to less secure secondary towns and villages to open branch offices.

177 369 441 467 The merchants of the city monopolized the whole commerce of the country. They sent out their agents to buy up as much grain, oil, and wine (alcohol) as possible; they bought the products collected by peddlers; their agents pitched their tents at lamasery fairs and festivals and at clan diets, to provide people with groceries, cloth, silk, and hardware. The small shopkeepers scattered over the country bought their wares from the wholesale merchants in Hsining. The guilds enjoyed the privileges of trading with the nomad caravans, which had to stop and unload at their inns in order to sell their merchandise, and to buy through them the things they wanted, such as flour, oil, and cloth.

Farmers were not allowed to sell flour, oil, and other products directly to the caravans. They had to go through the guild of the *Hsieh chia*, those who controlled the "rest places." Thus the guild alone controlled the trade in the high-priced furs and other articles carried